

Passions fuel Jamestown's arts activities

By Andrea Winkjer Collin

Risk takers, available volunteers and an attitude that arts activities enhance a community. These are the key ingredients that fuel Jamestown's passion for the arts.

"People around here don't want to live in a community where there's nothing going on," says Toni Pirkel, one of Jamestown's arts volunteers. Lyle Lere, a board member of the Jamestown Fine Arts Association, concurs. "There is so much potential for the arts here," he says. "We recognize that it is a good tool for economic development."

"Just like sports, we are committed to building a regional audience for a variety of arts events," says Taylor Barnes, executive director of the Jamestown Fine Arts Association.

Variety aptly describes Jamestown's arts environment. From its early roots in community choral music groups, events and activities have grown in size and dimension. For the past 30 years, the Jamestown Fine Arts Association has worked to bring a variety of activities, events and performances to Jamestown. Headquartered since 1981 in a renovated movie theater in downtown Jamestown, activities emanate from there, as well as the new Reiland Center for the

Performing Arts at Jamestown College. During the summer The Artisans, a volunteer group of regional artists, display and sell artwork at the Ila and J.A. Kirkpatrick Gallery at Jamestown's Frontier Village.

Central to the associa-

tion's mission is its collaboration with the school system and its programming for youngsters. The Artist in Residence program during the 2002-2003 school year brought nine artists into Jamestown school, including a

children's theater from Minneapolis, a mime, a storyteller, a woodwind quintet from the Fargo-Moorhead symphony and the "Daughters of Africa" Mixed Blood Theatre.

Other school programs are ArtLook, a volunteer program bringing art history, art appreciation and visual arts with the use of reproductions into school classrooms; Arts After School, a daily program for upper elementary students which provides two-way transportation, a daily snack and an art lesson with a

professional; and School Tours, where teachers bring students to the Arts Center to take part in a tour, a discussion of the artwork in the gallery, and a visual arts project. Also offered are summer classes at the Arts Center.

"The variety of these programs offer students higher level thinking skills," says Jake Wolf, director of elementary school for the Jamestown Public Schools. "We are the envy of other school districts in the state."

Dana Carlson, principal of Jamestown's Roosevelt Elementary School, says the city's programs appeal to all types of youngsters. "Many students who are new to this country like the after-school program because it gives them an opportunity to learn English through the universal language of the arts," he says. "Other students who don't shine as brightly in their classroom also enjoy them. These classes enhance their self worth."

Barnes, who has a college degree in fine arts and sculpting, has been executive director of the Arts Association since 1998, and oversees the constant activity at the Arts Center. The events at the Center's 2,000-square-foot gallery are managed by staff member Sally Jeppson. The gallery features rotating exhibits from regional artists. Also in the gallery, theatre and music groups use the small stage for performances, and local businesses host meetings



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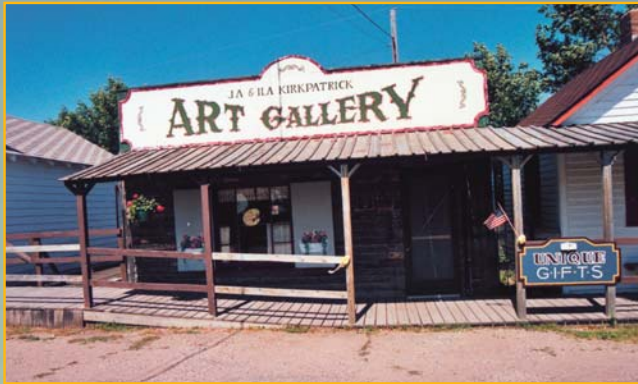


Children participate in arts classes throughout the year.

and receptions.

The appearances by national artists and performers are often the result of Barnes' untiring efforts to bring them to the city. An example of this is the October 12 appearance by solo pianist George Winston. As a result of contacting his agent, Barnes was able to make arrangements for his performance.

Because of its experience with extensive programming of artists in the schools, Jamestown will be the only city in the state to host Midwest World Fest, a global arts and education outreach performing arts program. It is sponsored by Arts Midwest, a regional arts association in which the North



Regional artists sell and display their work at Jamestown's Frontier Village.

Dakota Council on the Arts is a member, as well as the National Endowment for the Arts, Cargill, 3M, the Japan Foundation and the Jamestown Fine Arts Association.

In a two-year cycle, four ensembles representing distinct cultures will tour in nine states. The first of these ensembles to present school and community programs in Jamestown is Chuchumbe, from Veracruz, Mexico, presenting a multicultural mix of Spanish, African and indigenous influences. It will be in Jamestown November 16-22.

The second appearance will be the Bamboo Orchestra from Japan, which plays 20 bamboo instruments of Japan and Asia. It will visit Jamestown March 21-26. Israeli ethnic musician Eyal Sela will perform in Jamestown next fall. He will perform the Turkish clarinet, Indian bamboo flutes, Irish penny whistle, clarinet, the Norwegian osterdal, Armenian dudak and the saxophone.

The final Midwest World Fest performance will be in the fall of 2005 when the Gullah Kinfolk perform gospel music from the Sea Islands in Beaufort County, South Carolina. The group is headed by Anita Singleton-Prather, who is a storyteller, singer, educator, actress and historian.

Regional high school juniors and seniors will participate in "A Day of Shakespeare" January 22 when the Guthrie Theater of Minneapolis will give a performance of "Othello," and present related workshops for the students. The theater will be in town conducting a week-long residency at Jamestown College.

And, with a constant eye to the future, already Barnes is alerting community volunteers to the help she will need at a

Folk Festival she is planning for the summer of 2005.

"This will celebrate North Dakota's cultures," she says. "It will also help instill a greater appreciation for traditional culture and build more community-based education opportunities for involvement with various ethnic/traditional groups. It will also be a way to bring back to Jamestown several of the artists who will be working here during the next two years."

Her voice is full of confidence as she talks about plans for the future, knowing that the Jamestown community will be behind her. "Lots of people here are committed to making the arts thrive in this community," she says. "They understand the value of being engaged in the creative process."

For more information on the Jamestown Fine Arts Association, contact the Arts Center, 115 2nd St. SW, Jamestown, ND 58401, 701-251-2496, www.jamestownartscenter.org.



The Arts Center brings young and old to activities and events.



Young artists model their creations.

Jamestown's Artist-In-Residence, Arts After School and other programs are supported by grants from the North Dakota Council on the Arts. For more information about the North Dakota Council on the Arts and its programs that support community arts across the state, call 701-328-7590, or visit its website at www.discovernd.com/arts.